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Assembly California Legislature



CONNIE CONWAY
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September 19, 2013

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 571 (Gatto) – Request for Signature

Dear Governor Brown:

I am writing to request your signature on AB 571 (Gatto), which would help protect one of California's most iconic industries, citrus. The citrus industry accounts for 12,000 jobs in California, has \$2 billion in gross revenue, and creates another \$1.5 billion in economic activity for our state. Without your signature on AB 571, all of this is at risk of being destroyed by one small bug.

The Huanglongbing (HLB) disease has caused more than 250,000 acres of citrus in Florida to be removed from production. HLB is responsible for the removal of over 12 million citrus trees in Brazil. The same disease has decimated citrus production in China as well, forcing the industry to physically relocate in a different part of the country – a luxury California does not have. Texas now has HLB as do the citrus producing states in Mexico. California's citrus industry has learned from the unfortunate devastation of others and reacted by assessing themselves \$15 million per year for the past four years in an effort to fight HLB and the bug that vectors and transmits the disease, the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). Because of the industry's commitment, federal funds were allocated to help fight the ACP and HLB, in the amount of \$11.5 million.

Unfortunately, the federal commitment to California is uncertain. Federal funding has gone down recently and California's citrus industry leaders are repeatedly alerted by federal officials that they prefer to see "stakeholder support" that demonstrates dedication from both the industry and the state government. Signing AB 571 not only allocates \$5 million towards the vital effort, but also shows the state's partnership in making this issue a priority, which will strengthen the effort to continue federal funding.

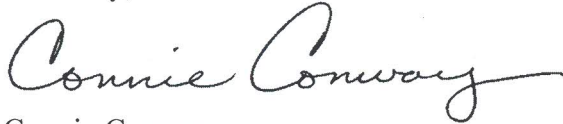
The majority of the \$5 million is intended to be used to produce a beneficial insect, the tamarixia radiata (tamarixia), which will reduce the ACP population in Southern California. Using a beneficial insect protects backyard citrus trees, of which there are more than there are of commercial citrus trees, and reduces reliance on chemical treatments. The California citrus industry is proud to have funded the University of California research to find the tamarixia and is hopeful that the production and release of it will make this citrus program as successful as the sterile medfly program. The beneficial insect is being reared at two facilities in California (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

and University of California, Riverside) and this money would expedite that process and get these important bugs into Southern California to combat the ACP.

Your signature on AB 571 will help produce the tamarixia to decimate the massive numbers of ACP in Southern California which is our best chance of continuing to have California be the only citrus producing region to successfully stop the ACP before it can spread HLB. With your help, we hope to find a cure before our California citrus is destroyed.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie Conway". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Connie Conway
Assembly Republican Leader, 26th District